

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 ISO-00 IO-13 AID-05 CIAE-00
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PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ACDA-12
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O R 090735Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2117
INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL MADRAS
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 8975

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, IN, PK
SUBJECT: INDO-PAK RELATIONS: THE VIEW FROM DELHI ON THE
EVE OF THE DESAI VISIT TO WASHINGTON

REF: (A) ISLAMABAD 5306; (B) NEW DELHI 7925

1. SUMMARY. THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA IS WELL AWARE OF THE
HARSHER ATTITUDES RECENTLY ADOPTED IN PAKISTAN TOWARD FURTHER
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IMPROVEMENTS IN INDO-PAK RELATIONS. IT ATTRIBUTES THIS HARD-
ENING TO PAK REACTION TO AFGHANISTAN DEVELOPMENTS AND TO THE
WEAKNESS OF THE ZIA GOVERNMENT, TWO ELEMENTS WHICH ARE CON-
NECTED IN THE INDIAN VIEW. THE INDIAN CONCEDE THAT THEIR EARLY
RECOGNITION OF THE NEW AFGHAN GOVERNMENT HAS HAD A PARTICULARLY
DAMAGING EFFECT, AND THAT DESPITE THEIR EXPLANATIONS AND RE-
ASSURANCES PAK SUSPICIONS PERSIST. FOR THE TIME BEING, THE

INDIANS ARE MAINTAINING A DAMAGE-LIMITING APPROACH TOWARD ISLAMABAD'S CHANGE IN ATTITUDE. THEY HAVE NOT ADVERTISED THE COOLING OF THE RELATIONSHIP. PUBLICLY, THE JANATA GOVERNMENT REMAINS COMMITTED TO IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS, INCLUDING PAKISTAN, AND WITH AN IMPORTANT POLITICAL STAKE IN THIS POLICY WILL BE RELUCTANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE ANY SIGNIFICANT DETERIORATION IN INDO-PAK TIES. INDIAN RESTRAINT IN THE FACE OF PAK OUTCRIES AND PERCEIVED INTRANSIGENCE HAS NOT BEEN UNIVERSAL. THE GOI HAS EXPRESSED THROUGH THE PRESS ITS DISSATISFACTION WITH GOP TACTICS IN THE NUCLEAR FIELD. THE INDIANS CONTINUE TO SUSPECT THAT THE PAKS HAVE EXAGGERATED THEIR CONCERN ABOUT KABUL IN ORDER TO GET ARMS FROM THE WEST. THE UNPOPULARITY HERE OF ZIA'S GOVERNMENT WILL EASE GOI PROBLEMS SHOULD THE INDIANS DECIDE TO TAKE A TOUGHER LINE TOWARD PAKISTAN. END SUMMARY

2. THE GOI IS WELL AWARE, OF COURSE, OF THE HARsher ATTITUDE THE PAKS HAVE RECENTLY ADOPTED TOWARD FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS IN INDO-PAKISTAN RELATIONS (REF A). THE INDIANS ATTRIBUTED THIS CHANGE MAINLY TO TWO DEVELOPMENTS. THE FIRST, AND MORE IMMEDIATE, IS THE REACTION OF THE GOP TO THE COUP IN KABUL. THE OTHER, IN INDIAN EYES PERHAPS MORE FUNDAMENTAL, IS WHAT THE GOI CONSIDERS THE GROWING WEAKNESS AND LACK OF CONFIDENCE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF ZIA-UL-HAQ. IN THE INDIAN VIEW, THESE TWO ELEMENTS ARE CONNECTED. AS THEY SEE IT, PAKISTAN'S REACTION TO THE EVENTS IN AFGHANISTAN WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN AS

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DRASTIC AND (THEIR WORDS) NOT AS PANICKY HAD A STRONG, STABLE, AND SELF-CONFIDENT GOVERNMENT BEEN IN POWER IN ISLAMABAD.

3. IN DISCUSSING THE IMPACT OF THE KABUL COUP ON INDO-PAKISTAN RELATIONS, SENIOR MEA OFFICIALS READILY CONCEDE THAT THE INDIAN DECISION TO AFFORD EARLY RECOGNITION TO THE NEW AFGHAN GOVERNMENT HAD A PARTICULARLY DAMAGING EFFECT. THEY MAINTAIN THAT IN THEIR EFFORTS TO ALLAY PAK SUSPICIONS SPARKED BY THIS EARLY DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVE AND BY OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COUP THEY HAVE BEEN IN CLOSE AND HIGH LEVEL TOUCH WITH THE GOP HERE AND IN ISLAMABAD. THEY HAVE BEEN PREPARED, THEY TELL US, TO DISCUSS WITH THE PAKS THEIR DIFFERING INTERPRETATIONS OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF AFGHAN DEVELOPMENTS. THEY ADMIT, HOWEVER, THAT DESPITE THEIR EXPLANATIONS AND REASSURANCES, PAK SUSPICIONS PERSIST.

4. WE SUSPECT THAT GIVEN INDIA'S LONGTIME ACQUAINTANCE WITH PAKISTANI PARANOIAS, THE GOI PROBABLY CONCLUDED THAT NOTHING SHORT OF TOTAL INDIAN ACCEPTANCE OF THE PAK POSITION ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AFGHAN DEVELOPMENTS, IF THAT, WOULD HAVE SERVED TO KEEP INDO-PAK TIES ON AN EVEN KEEL. THE INDIANS WERE AT NO STAGE PREPARED TO TAKE SUCH A LINE. WE SEE NO EVIDENCE

HERE THAT THERE WAS EVER ANY SERIOUS EXPECTATION ON THE PART OF THE GOI THAT THE NEW DANGER FROM THE NORTHWEST SENSED IN ISLAMABAD WOULD PROMPT THE PAKS TO DRAW CLOSER TO INDIA. AS THEY WOULD SAY, THE INDIAN KNOW THE PAKS TOO WELL FOR THAT. INDIAN AMBASSADOR TO PAKISTAN BAJPAI'S REMARK TO THE POL COUNSELOR HERE LAST WEEKEND ABOUT PAKISTAN'S LEGACY OF 30 YEARS OF NEGATIVISM PROBABLY TYPIFIES GOI THINKING ABOUT THE LIMITS PAK HISTORY AND PSYCHOLOGY PLACE ON THE POSSIBILITIES OF THE GOP MOVING TOWARD NEW DELHI, EVEN IN THE FACE OF A SERIOUS PERCEIVED THREAT FROM ELSEWHERE.

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

KABUL DEVELOPMENTS APART, THE GOI APPEARS FAIRLY CONVINCED THAT THE ZIA GOVERNMENT HAS BECOME TOO WEAK AND UNSURE OF ITSELF TO TAKE THE TOUGH POLITICAL DECISIONS NEEDED TO PRESS FORWARD TOWARD BETTER RELATIONS WITH INDIA, PARTICULARLY, AS EMBASSY ISLAMABAD POINTS OUT, NOW THAT THE EASIER STEPS TOWARD

NORMALIZATION HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFULLY TAKEN. MORE AND MORE,
THE MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATION IS SEEN HERE AS INCOMPETENT AND
MALADROIT, UNABLE AND INCREASINGLY UNLIKELY TO FIND ANY RESO-
LUTION TO PAKISTAN'S FORMIDABLE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PROB-
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LEMS. AS JOINT SECRETARY I.P. SINGH COMMENTED THE OTHER DAY,
ZIA IS GETTING IN DEEPER AND DEEPER AND THERE SEEMS NO WAY
OUT.

6. FOR THE TIME BEING, THE INDIANS SEEM DISPOSED TO MAINTAIN
WHAT MIGHT BE CALLED A DAMAGE-LIMITING APPROACH TOWARD ISLAMA-
BAD'S CHANGE IN ATTITUDE. (BAJPAI USES THE TERM "SALVAGE
OPERATION".) THE GOI HAS NOT ADVERTIZED THE COOLING OF THE
RELATIONSHIP. INDEED, IT DELIBERATELY DOWNPLAYED THE FAIL-
URE OF THE EARLY MAY TRADE TALKS, DECLINED TO GO PUBLIC ON
WHAT IT PRIVATELY ALLEGES IS THE ECONOMIC SHAKINESS OF THE
GOP CASE, AND WAS APPARENTLY SUCCESSFUL IN MINIMIZING PRESS
DISCUSSION HERE OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN
THE INDIAN AND PAK POSITIONS. THE INDIAN LEADERSHIP HAS ALSO
GENERALLY CHOSEN TO IGNORE PAK ALLEGATIONS ABOUT A GOI HAND
IN AFGHANISTAN. (IT IS INCONCEIVABLE TO US THAT THEY COULD
BE UNAWARE OF THEM.) NOR HAS THE PRESS BEEN GUIDED TO THIS
SENSITIVE THEME. PUBLICLY, THE JANATA GOVERNMENT REMAINS
COMMITTED TO IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS, INCLUDING
PAKISTAN, AND WITH AN IMPORTANT POLITICAL STAKE IN THIS POLICY
WILL BE RELUCTANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE ANY SIGNIFICANT DETERIORATION
IN INDO-PAK TIES.

7. THIS SWEETNESS AND LIGHT IN THE FACE OF PAK OUTCRIES AND
PERCEIVED INTRANSIGENCE HAS NOT BEEN UNIVERSAL. MEA MAIN-
TAINS (AND FED THE STORY TO THE "HINDUSTAN TIMES") THAT THE
GOP STAND AT THE UNSSOD CALLING AGAIN FOR A SOUTH ASIA NUCLEAR
WEAPONS FREE ZONE BELIED THE HOPES RAISED DURING AGHA SHAHI'S
VISIT HERE IN APRIL THAT INDIA AND PAKISTAN WOULD ACT IN CON-
CERT AT THE SPECIAL SESSION. FOREIGN MINISTER VAJPAYEE SUB-
SEQUENTLY AGAIN RULED OUT INDIAN ACCEPTANCE OF THE CONCEPT.
THE INDIANS HAVE ALSO GONE PUBLIC WITH THE ALLEGATION THAT THE
PAKISTAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON IS LOBBYING AGAINST RESUPPLY
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OF ENRICHED URANIUM FOR TARAPUR. (THIS IS CARRIED IN THE SAME
MAY 31 "HINDUSTAN TIMES" ARTICLE IN WORDS WHICH ARE ALMOST
EXACTLY THE SAME AS THOSE I.P. SINGH USED A FEW DAYS LATER
WHEN BRIEFING THE POL COUNSELOR.) THE INDIANS ALLEGE THAT THIS
PAK EFFORT IS PARTICULARLY UNJUSTIFIED GIVEN THE GOI'S SILENCE

ON PAK PLANS TO ACQUIRE A REPROCESSING PLANT. ACCORDING TO SINGH, AMBASSADOR BAJPAI HAS BROUGHT THE MATTER TO THE ATTENTION OF THE GOP. BOTH SINGH AND BAJPAI TELL US THAT THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE GOI (SINGH MENTIONED DESAI AND VAJPAYEE SPECIFICALLY) ARE MOST ANNOYED BY THIS PAK STRATEGEM.

8. THE INDIANS ARE NOT BEYOND CASTING ASPERSIONS THEMSELVES. WE HAVE ALREADY REPORTED (REF B) THEIR SUSPICIONS THAT THE PAKS HAVE DELIBERATELY EXAGGERATED THEIR APPREHENSIONS OF THE THREAT FROM BEYOND THE DURAND LINE IN ORDER TO SECURE ARMS FROM THE WEST. THIS HAS NOT BEEN PARTICULARLY REFLECTED IN PRESS COVERAGE, HOWEVER. HOW STRONG A LINE THE GOI WOULD TAKE IF THE ARMS ACTUALLY BEGAN COMING WILL DEPEND ON MANY FACTORS, NOT LEAST THE DEGREE TO WHICH WE TAKE THE INDIANS INTO CONFIDENCE ABOUT WHAT WE ARE DOING AND OUR CONTEMPORARY ATTITUDE TOWARD THEIR OWN MILITARY SUPPLY PLANS.

9. UNFORTUNATELY, SHOULD THE GOI CHOOSE UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES TO MAKE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION OF ITS OWN TO THE WORSENING OF INDO-PAK RELATIONS, IT WOULD NOT BE TOO DIFFICULT FOR IT TO DO SO. ALTHOUGH THE GOI WOULD BE VULNERABLE TO CHARGES THAT ITS POLICY OF IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH THE NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES FAILED, AND THIS COULD BE PARTICULARLY DAMAGING TO VAJPAYEE AS THE "REFORMED" EX-JANA SANGHI ARCHITECT AND ADVOCATE OF BETTER INDO-PAK TIES, SUCH A HARDENING OF ATTITUDES WOULD PROBABLY GO OVER ALL TOO WELL IN INDIA. OLD IF NOW LATENT ANTAGONISMS TOWARD PAKISTAN APART, THE ZIA GOVERNMENT IS NOT WELL-REGARDED HERE. ITS PUBLIC IMAGE, NEVER PARTICULARLY GOOD, HAS DETERIORATED RECENTLY FOLLOWING THE SENTENCING OF BHUTTO AND THE MUSAWAT PROTESTS. THE REPORT THAT AMPUTATIONS ARE NOW AT HAND HAS NOT HELPED IT. BY ALL CONFIDENTIAL

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ACCOUNTS, INCLUDING THOSE OF THE PAK EMBASSY, THE MUSLIM MINORITY IS STRONGLY PRO-BHUTTO AND HOLDS ZIA IN LOW ESTEEM. THE SOCIALIST ELEMENT IN THE RULING JANATA PARTY IS NOW BEGINNING TO CALL FOR STATEMENTS AGAINST HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN PAKISTAN. GENERAL ZIA'S POOR PUBLIC STANDING HERE WILL NOT ITSELF PROMPT THE GOI TO HARDEN ITS POSITION, BUT SHOULD IT DECIDE TO DO SO PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD THE MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATION WOULD HELP GENERATE A SYMPATHETIC RESPONSE. BLOOD

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